

- The IL Specialists (Contractor) coordinates financial aide application/packet with youth (FASFA, MTAG, Institution);
  - The youth must first apply for, and have received confirmation and/or disapproval notices from applications made for the Pell Grant, MTAG, scholarships, or other grants the youth may have applied for. The IL Specialist must also factor in the sources and amounts of any other funds that may be available to the youth.
- The IL Specialists (Contractor) coordinates ETV application with youth; and sends application to the COR Social Worker and ASWS for signature; upon obtaining signatures;
- The IL Specialists sends ETV application to State Independent Living Coordinator for review;
- The State Independent Living Coordinator sends the ETV notification to the DFCS Administration Unit Director to ensure the county of responsibility has ample State Funds in the Mississippi Automated Child Welfare Information System (MACWIS) for the county to select an Education and Training Voucher Support Service;
- The State Independent Living Coordinator notifies (by phone or e-mail) the County of Responsibility (COR) Social Worker to expedite notice to enter the ETV support service request in MACWIS by selecting the Education and Training Voucher Support Service;
- County of Responsibility social worker enters the ETV request in MACWIS;
- A tickler (electronic notification) is received by the Area Social Work Supervisor to review/approve the ETV request in MACWIS;
- A tickler (electronic notification) is sent to the State IL Coordinator;
- The State Independent Living Coordinator reviews/approves the ETV request in MACWIS;
- The ETV tickler (electronic notification) goes to the County of Responsibility Bookkeeper to be expedited;
- The County of Responsibility Bookkeeper prepares payment for the approved ETV Support Service provider (vendor or youth).

While the ETV application approval process has been revised, additional assessments of the process are still needed to improve timely approval. The NRCYD, the S.A.I.L.S. Committee, and the State Independent Living Coordinator are collaborating to identify steps that can be taken to further reduce barriers for timely application approval. Strategies already in place to accomplish this task include:

- The SCSCY contract renewal was modified to include a revised scope of services based on the assistance with the application process
- On-site technical assistance is scheduled and was held in July 2005 at the *"Lookin' to the Future"* Conference to review the effectiveness of SCSCY services in assisting youths with ETV applications.

ETV funds are used to assist foster youth and former foster youth with funds to successfully transition towards self-sufficiency. The availability of the funds will empower DFCS staff with the bargaining tools to encourage youth to attend college

or vocational training schools. There were 41 youth who received ETV funds this past year (FY2005). The expected outcomes of maximizing the ETV funds are:

- Youth will be able to enroll and complete post secondary and vocational programs
- Youth will be more marketable and able to broaden the spectrum of job opportunities
- Youth will be able to afford better housing and transportation
- Youth will be able to be more self sufficient
- Youth will have an opportunity to break the cycle of dependency on the State

Mississippi's plan is to expand the ETV funds by:

- Assisting with room and board for youth attending college
- Assisting with enrolling eligible youth into a computer camp to train them on computer skills
- Purchasing computers for youth participating in the ETV Program
- Assisting with child care vouchers
- Assisting with travel expenses to included insurance payments
- Continuing to explore in assisting with car insurance (liability)
- Assisting with membership to school related organizations
- Assisting with preparatory test and study materials
- Providing payments for travel expenses incurred when going home for holidays or vacations, or payments for other housing when the college dormitories are closed.

The July 2005 "*Lookin' to the Future*" Conference served as a forum to orient IL Specialists, DFCS caseworkers, supervisors and foster and adoptive parents attending the Independent Living technical assistance sessions. Those attending the conference included the MDHS State Independent Living Coordinator, selected S.A.I.L.S. Advisory Board members, the PREPARE Independent Living Specialists, the PREPARE Program Director, Foster and Adoptive parents from the nine regions. Representatives from the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians were invited to attend. Technical Assistance was provided by the NCWRCYD in the areas of positive youth development, creative life skills training, transitional outreach programs, becoming a responsible teen, working together for successful youth transition, and youth in transition, and the law.

The State Independent Living Coordinator attended the regional staff meetings for provide orientation to ASWS's about the revised application and approval process. The IL Specialists were invited and attended scheduled foster and adoptive parent training. This enabled the Independent Living Specialists to orient to the Foster and Adoptive parents about the ETV application and approval process for youth in their care. A re-assessment of the contractual scope of services is to be completed by May 2006 and will continue annually.

The following eligible individuals will be considered for Educational and Training Vouchers:

- Youth currently in the foster care system

- Youth who have left foster care because they attained 18 years of age, and have not yet attained 21 years of age
- Youth who were adopted at age 16 and have not yet attained 21 years of age
- Youth who graduate high school, receive a GED, or a certificate of attendance
- Students must have participated in the ETV Program prior to their 21<sup>st</sup> birthday in order to continue receiving ETV funds until age 23

Before the ETV funds can be considered, PREPARE Independent Living Specialists and/or the youth must first apply for, and have received confirmation and/or disapproval notices from applications made for the Pell Grant, MTAG, scholarships, or other grants the youth may have applied for. The IL Specialist must also factor in the sources and amounts of any other funds that may be available to the youth. Mississippi will use ETV funds to supplement the additional funds needed to cover expenses not covered in the youth's financial award package up to \$5,000 per year. The funds may be applied for annually or by the time frame of the institution of higher learning or vocational program, the youth is enrolled in, that shows completion of a semester or term. Funds will be applied for on the following criteria:

- Enrolled in an institution of higher education, as defined by the Higher Education Act of 1965:
  - Awards a Bachelor's Degree or is not less than a two-year program (Associate's Degree) that provides credit towards a degree, or;
  - Provides not less than one year of training towards gainful employment, or;
  - Is a vocational program that has been in existence for at least two years and provides training for gainful employment.
- In good standing with the college, university or vocational training school;
- Maintaining a grade point average of 2.0 on a 4.0 scale. If grade point average is below a 2.0, the youth has one semester to reestablish a 2.0 grade point average;
- Making progress towards completing the programs they are enrolled in;
- Priority will be given to full time students in the event of ETV funding being depleted, per federal fiscal year.

A worker who receives an ETV request from a Youth out of care and eligible for the ETV program shall complete a Case Management service in MACWIS, requesting the appropriate support service for the ETV voucher. This can be entered from any county location, regardless of the originating county of responsibility. Youth enrolled in the ETV program on their 21<sup>st</sup> birthday may continue in the ETV program until their 23<sup>rd</sup> birthday, upon meeting the above criteria.

- **Inter-Country Adoptions** – The Inter-Country Adoption Act was signed on October 6, 2000. In Mississippi, MDHS is responsible for the approval of international adoption home studies prior to their submission to the Immigration and Naturalization Service. Adoption and post-adoption services are provided directly by the child placing agencies who are handling the adoption. DFCS is responsible for carrying out the provisions of the Inter-Country Adoption Act for the protection and well-being of children adopted from other countries living in the United States. A system for tracking children adopted from other countries

was developed through the collaborative efforts of Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC), the Adoption Unit, and the data systems of DFCS. The agency has not conducted any inter-country adoptions during the past two years.

The Adoption Consortium is composed of representatives from private adoption agencies, private therapeutic foster care providers, and State adoption personnel. The Adoption Consortium meets every two months to discuss adoption, including domestic and international adoptions, as well as adoption legislation.

The private adoption agencies are aware of the needs of families who adopt internationally. These needs and concerns are brought to the Consortium meetings to the State representatives. Constant contact is made with MDHS staff when these families experience any type of crisis. The private agencies have been made aware of the services MDHS provides to all families. These services include medical care, emergency financial services, housing information, clothing information, family preservation, post-adoption services and intensive in-home services.

Plans are being made to increase services provided by the post-adoption contract. Additional post-adoption services will include enhanced academic services, development of more support groups, increased respite care, training to foster/adopt families of diagnoses, how to work with children with these diagnoses, adoption preparation training. Other plans include securing information on other States' programs, modifying Mississippi's program to meet the needs of the families, and continuing to work on legislation for more post-adoption services.

State services available to international adoptees are listed in the materials given by INS (U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service). The ICPC Unit (Interstate Compact Placement Contract) for Mississippi is continually contacted by INS when families are adopting internationally. The ICPC Unit is instrumental in assisting families once the child is here in the United States. Since the Unit is currently under supervision of the Senior Adoption Administrator, information on the types of services to adoptive families is readily available.

The Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children is in the planning stage of re-writing the Compact. Once completed, the new Compact will have to be approved by at least 20 State Legislatures before it can go into affect. This legislation may change how INS relates to ICPC on adoption matters.

The County Offices are contacted when families are in crisis. If an adoption results in disruption, the County Offices continue to report the information to the State Office for instructions on how to handle the case. The State has had no recent report on this type issue.

International adoptions are not done by the State. Private agencies handle these adoptions. It is uncommon for the State to become involved with international placements and disruptions. However, services are available to these families as they are to all other families—such as information on housing, food, financial assistance, legal assistance, and school related issues.

Families that have adopted are benefiting from support groups offered through the ASAP post-adoption services contract. ASAP has worked with some of these families by providing literature on cultural and behavioral issues.

MDHS has knowledge of one international adoption that became problematic. The State provided the American-Asian child, who has mental and physical disabilities, therapy and therapeutic placements due to the severe abuse sustained in the first adoptive placement. The child was placed in three adoptive placements. He was finally adopted and is now in college.

The private agencies and MDHS have ongoing projects. Last year, the group hosted an event for all foster/adopt families. Families that had adopted internationally were made aware of the event to encourage partnership and participation. This event was also used as a recruitment tool. In so doing, a sibling group of four was matched with a couple who had been very persistent in providing these children with a “forever” home. The couple saw the children on “*Wednesday’s Child*” (on WLBT) and wanted to parent the children.

- **Foster and Adoptive Parents Recruitment** - Adoption Unit staff are located across the state. The unit is divided into three districts. Each district is assigned an Adoption Administrator and Licensure and Adoption workers. They are responsible for recruitment of foster/adopt families, training of foster/adopt parents, and also responsible for completing home studies and background checks of foster/adopt families. The staff is responsible for making adoptive placements and supervising those placements until finalizations.

The State currently has 1,317 foster/adopt homes licensed. The Licensure Specialists report to the Adoption Administrators and they are required to complete home studies for foster/adopt families as well as recruit, train, license, monitor activities within the home, and complete changes, closures and reevaluations every two years for foster/adopt homes. During this period, 175 new foster/adopt homes were approved and 45 foster families were closed.

Staff from DFCS Training Program and Foster/Adopt Licensure unit provides a minimum of 12 hours of in-service training per school per quarter. (Each university will provide a total of 48 hours of training per year.)

The State has received approval for technical assistance from NCWRC to assist licensure adoption program with revising foster/adoptive parents in senior training curricula known as PATHS to enhance foster/adoptive parents’ role in working with birth parents and agency.



- **Adoption Incentive Payments** – Adoption incentive funding has over the years provided opportunities for additional staff (recruiters), equipment to assist staff in providing better service to families, provided for foster/adoptive children's needs, travel and training for staff, training for foster/adopt parents, and other necessities. The funding will continue to be used for the above mentioned areas.

The funds will be used to create an adoption booklet for the 82 counties and private providers. The Agency is working with a private company to develop an array of services to photograph our children as well as complete the booklet. The company will assist with the website. Other areas to be included will be more medical coverage, academic support to families, specialized counseling services, respite services, more collaboration with other agencies, case preparation training, staff training on how to help children prepare for adoption, and making library information more accessible.

Plans for use of the adoption incentive funds include stipends for high school seniors. After graduation from high school and upon entering college, the Adoption program is working to provide payment for books and fees for adopted children. Other assistance to families would include fall stipends for children free for adoption.

The Adoption Unit has developed a plan to assist families in receiving additional assistance for children who have circumstances other than medical needs such as court issues, specialized tutoring services, recognition in sport activities, etc.

The Adoption Unit assisted in providing financial services to families to improve the home after other resources have been explored.

- **Current Executive Initiatives: Healthy Marriage, Fatherhood, Rural Development, Positive Youth Development, and Faith-Based and Community Initiatives:**
  1. **Families First Parent Resource Centers (FFRC)** are located in nine (9) regions and provide multiple services including resource referral and information to families and children within their local community. Many of the FFRCs are providing services funded through other resources, but DFCS has basically charged them with implementing the following: healthy marriage initiatives, fatherhood initiatives, abstinence, and effective parenting skills. There are currently thirty-one (31) FFRCs funded through the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) grant and seven (7) that are funded through Promoting Safe and Stable Families grant (PSSF).
  2. **Mississippi Community Family Coalition (MCFC)** – This coalition would take the place of Project Homestead. It is the plan of DFCS to continue with our community involvement through this coalition. In working as a collaborative (team) toward a common end, MCFC will empower

*disadvantaged* families and children through goals and activities that provide inspiration, value, education, coaching, and mentoring. These goals will include: (1) strengthening families and children by identifying and/or providing needed community resources; (2) easing accessibility and preventing duplication of services; (3) modeling effective programs to strengthen families and communities; (4) increasing parents' confidence and competence in their parenting abilities; (5) enhancing child development; (6) providing recreational and educational activities for the entire family; (7) encouraging volunteerism to develop individual life skills essential to strong and healthy families and communities.

Some specific activities that will be used to meet these goals are as follows:

- a) Develop collaborative programs that address current and meaningful issues.
- b) Integrate cultural competence that relates to families from diverse cultures in a sensitive, respectful and productive way.
- c) Encourage independent living skills for mildly disabled middle/high school students.
- d) Implement healthy marriage initiatives for adults and adolescents.
- e) Provide disadvantaged mothers with early childhood education.
- f) Coordinate fun events connecting non-custodial parents and their children.
- g) Volunteer to assist with head start staff development.
- h) Linking families and children with after school care programs.
- i) Participate in community improvement activities.
- j) Acknowledge traditional holidays.

The MCFC will meet once a month to assess the changing needs of families. In partnership with the Regional Network Coordinator (RNC), MCFC will help to develop and implement collaborative programs that address current and meaningful issues within their immediate communities. Working in continual collaboration with the RNC, State Coordinator, State Level Advisory Board, and FDCS, MCFC will assist DFCS with decreasing the number of children that are abused or neglected across the state of Mississippi.

3. **Children's Justice Act Task Force** – This committee is comprised of law officers, judges, attorneys, child protection specialists, ASWS's, medical staff, psychologists, school officials, and advocates. The members of this task force are selected by the Governor and their tenure runs parallel with the Governor's term of service. Governor Barbour won office for the State of Mississippi in January 2004 and had selected the members of this board by July 2004. The group has been meeting quarterly ever since. The primary responsibility of this task force has been overseeing the Children's Justice Act funds and assisting in the development of the county multidisciplinary teams (MDT).

Two grantees facilitate the MDT project and they report to the task force on the amount of trainings provided, the number of county MDTs, and the conviction rate on child sexual abuse cases. The task force uses this information to make recommendations to DFCS on how to best facilitate the CJA funds and services in the coming year.

The task force decided that the following services should be DFCS' focus in the coming year:

- a) The Task Force will continue to contract with Family Crisis Services of Northwest MS and the Center for the Prevention of Child Abuse, Inc., for the continued development of the Statewide Network. Both contractors have satisfactorily met the goals of the project to date.
- b) Expand the Statewide Multi-disciplinary Child Abuse Team Network to achieve review team presence in 100% of the eighty-two (82) counties in Mississippi. Begin transitioning of MDTs from grantee to county to promote ownership of the MDTs at the local level and provide the grantee with additional time to work on expansion of program.
- c) Provide approximately 20 dates of forensic training for first responders such as emergency room doctors and nurses, law enforcement, and social workers. To increase the ability and knowledge base of the people who are the first contact with a child victim, to assist in their ability to know what to ask and how not to question a child, and to provide the first responder with the ability to articulate his/her observations in a manner that will be allowable in court and understood by laymen in the jury.
- d) Provide approximately 10 dates of forensic training as part of the Court Improvement Plan (CIP) which would include training judges, Guardian ad litem, district attorneys and county prosecutors in order to educate the court personnel on the forensic interview techniques, the importance of safeguarding the child from being re-victimized, and to increase their knowledge in how to question a child who may come before them in court.
- e) Develop a pilot program, consisting of a court liaison between the Mississippi Department of Human Services and Youth Court who focuses on child abuse and neglect abuse cases, particularly sexual abuse cases. The goal of this objective is to increase the number of offenders actually receiving jail time. Forest, Washington and Harrison counties are being considered for the pilot.
- f) The continued provision of technical assistance and training to the active teams in the Statewide MDT Network. A minimum of two regional trainings will be conducted to allow for increased access for teams from all areas of the state.

The task force is in the process of conducting a three year assessment. This information will be included in next year's annual report, along with any and all recommendations made by the task force after analyzing the data.



- 4. MDHS - Child Fatality Review Team** - MDHS-Child Fatality Review Team (CFRT) was formed in May 2005, to review child fatality investigations conducted by MDHS. The team is comprised of DFCS State Office staff from Adoption, Licensure-Foster Homes, Licensure-Facilities, Family Preservation, Training and Protection Units. The goal of the review team is to decrease the number of child fatalities related to child abuse and neglect. The objectives of the CFRT are as follows:
- Review final investigations of child fatalities investigated by MDHS/DFCS;
  - Make recommendations to the DFCS Division Director, in regard to reviews;
  - Make recommendations to the DFCS Division Director, in regard to changes in policy, procedures, practice and legislation, as deemed necessary by the team or as directed by the MDHS/DFCS executive administration staff;
  - Provide an Annual Report of findings, recommendations, and determinations to the DFCS Division Director for inclusion in the Title IV-B Plan. (See Annual Report below).

**FFY 2005: MDHS - Child Fatality Review Team**

- The team will meet quarterly.
- All child death investigations conducted by MDHS will be reviewed by each team member.
- Revise the objectives and the review process and procedures as deemed necessary by the team or as directed by the division director.
- Each team member provides suggestions regarding the format and content of the Review Sheet.
- Each team member will complete a Child Fatality Review Sheet based upon his/her review of the death investigation.
- Team members would be assigned a child death case prior to the meeting and lead in the discussion of that case when the team meets
- Review child death investigations that occurred beginning in the 2005 calendar.

# Meetings held	3
# Child deaths incidents	16
# Child deaths cases reviewed	4

- Certificates and Assurances (No changes)**

**CFCIP**

Information regarding Chafee was included, but did not provide specific information regarding FY 2006 and FY 2007.

- **Please report on the specific CFCIP accomplishments achieved in FY 2006 and planned activities and budgetary levels for FY 2007 for each of the five purpose areas.**

**Specific Accomplishments:**

- Youth participation in SAILS monthly meeting;
- IL Program adopts a new slogan, "Now is the Time...Today is the Day!", which focuses on encouraging all participants, from staff to youth, to not waste time of get involved as much as possible;
- Re-establishment of HOPE Forum;
- Drafting, printing & distribution of the ETV brochure;
- Revamping & distribution of the new Independent Living policy;
- Drafting, printing, & distribution of the Aftercare brochure;
- Mississippi IL Program was represented at the National Governors Association-Institute on Youth Transitioning out of Foster Care;
- Initiated contact with a Mentor program-Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Mississippi;
- Nine (9) Youth retreats held with
- Two (2) Youth conferences held in June and July, 2006
- Mississippi selected to participate in the National Resource Center for Family-Centered Practice and Permanency Planning- Training of Child Welfare Agency Supervisors in the Effective Delivery and Management of Federal Independent Living Service for Youth in Foster Care;
- Independent Living Program and ETV Program Power-Point presentation completed for presenting state-wide;
- Regional meetings attended to present information;
- The 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Computer Camp for youth in care held;
- ETV Radio announcement released to the public;
- Transitional Living Plan updated and released for usage in MACWIS. New commands placed on the Individual Service Plan to make it mandatory to complete a Transitional Living Plan for all youth who turn 16;
- Implementation of the FYI-3 handbook for foster youth;
- Technical & Training assistance received from the National Child Welfare Resource Center for Youth Development;
- Mississippi representation at the 2006 Destination Future National Youth Leadership Conference;
- Increase in the stakeholder relationship with the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indian Tribe;
- Mississippi Band of Choctaw youth attended Skills Groups, and the Youth Conference;
- Youth information was presented by the NRCFCPPP at three (3) major conference venues in Mississippi;

- Various youth focus groups held through out the year in an effort to gather information to enhance Hurricane Katrina rebuilding efforts.

**Planned Activities:**

The MDHS-DFCS Independent Living Program is contracting with SCSCY-PREPARE Program to provide the following services for the upcoming year:

- The employment of a Program Director who will coordinate all facets of the Independent Living Program from a central office, preferably in the Jackson area, where coordination with the State Office can be maintained, two (2) Senior Independent Living Specialists, eight (8) Independent Living Specialists for the geographically outlined DFCS regions designated by MDHS.
- Shall provide services to youth living in foster homes, emergency shelters, group homes, relative placements, residential treatment centers, therapeutic group homes, training schools located in Mississippi and the Mobile, Alabama area. Distribute and announce any and all activities for the ILP, to youth placed in the areas above, to include the State Independent Living Coordinator. The announcements shall be in colored paper.
- The utilization of data collected and furnished by MDHS to locate and administer an independent living skills assessment and program to each appropriate youth who is eligible for the Independent Living Program.
- Provide monthly statistical reports by region and by counties to include the number of eligible youths for Independent Living services, the number of skills groups offered, the number of youth actually participating and the percentages of participation.
- Provide weekly activity reports that reflect unduplicated numbers of youth to whom services were given and the nature of the services. Reports will include a break out of the same level of participation, number and dates of services provided to the youths of the Band of Choctaw Indians and the Unaccompanied Refugee Minors. Reports are due the evening of the first working day following the week of services.
- Provide monthly activity reports that reflect unduplicated numbers of youth to whom services were given and the nature of the services. Reports are due by the tenth day of each month.
- Provide a quarterly report to include the following information: Job Status, Type of employment, Level of pay, Type of benefits, A target of 60% achievement of a high school diploma, Of the remaining 40% that did not receive a high school diploma, one-half should achieve a GED.
- Provide an Independent Living Plan and a Transitional Living Plan for each participating youth based on IL assessment results and personal contact. The Transitional Living Plan shall be updated every six (6) months, and distributed to the County of Responsibility worker of that particular youth. The Independent Living Plan will be updated after the completion of each component.
- Provide skills training, using nationally recognized, Ansell-Casey Life Skills curriculum, approved by DFCS, to participating youth based on assessments,

personal contact, the Independent Living Plan Study and the Transitional Living Plan Study. The curriculum now contains eight modules. The titles of the modules are: Community Resources and Transportation, Communication Skills and Social Development, Employment, Money Management, Decision Making and Study Skills, Housing, Daily Living Skills, and Self-Care. These modules address the five (5) areas of development identified by the Youth Development and Youth Leadership in Programs Organization. The five areas identified are Working, Learning, Thriving, Connecting, and Leading. An additional module titled Youth Law Issues will be added during the contract period. Knowledge of the youth will be measured by the utilization of a pre-test at the beginning of each curriculum module. A component review (post-test) instrument will measure learning at the completion of each module. The results of the post-test will be compared to the pre-test given at the beginning of each curriculum component. A statewide average score of 70% achievement for each module will be the target. A compilation of the data will be provided to the State Independent Living Coordinator. Skills Group activities, when appropriate, shall be conducted at key physical locations of the Component presented, at the discretion of the IL Specialist. Key physical locations may include, but not limited to, grocery store, bank, post office, social security office, etc.

- Transportation to skills groups, retreats, teen conferences shall be provided and/or otherwise arranged by the Independent Living Specialists.
- Provide community awareness of the needs of the youth in foster care by participating in available forums. Reports of meetings attended will be completed monthly and a copy provided to the State Independent Living Coordinator.
- The planning and coordination of two (2) youth conferences for 100 youth, ages 16-20, and 25 MDHS Staff who are appropriate for participation in the Independent Living Program. The planning and coordination will include, but not be limited to: living accommodations, meals, transportation, agendas, itineraries, presenters, activities, schedules, and two (2) Registered Nurses. Let it be understood the youth Conferences are sponsored events of MDHS and shall be publicized as such.
- The planning coordination of at least nine (9) retreats to be located in different geographical areas of the State so as to furnish an opportunity for participation by appropriate youth in at least one retreat during the contract period. Each retreat shall be open to approximately forty (40) youth, with a minimum of twenty (20) participants. The planning and coordination shall include, but not be limited to: living accommodations, meals, transportation, agendas, itineraries, presenters, activities, and schedules. Retreats will be based on themes to include, but not limited to, leadership, healthy choices, abstinence (showing of the "In the Heat of the Moment" video, etc.)
- Conduct a fishing event for youth in care, ages 14-15, in the summer months. The number of youth shall not exceed 30 youth participants, and shall include MDHS Staff and IL specialist. The event shall be presented to apply fishing to life skills & principles. This is to uphold the principle of "Give a man a

fish, feed him for a day; teach a man to fish, feed him for a life time.”

- Develop a functioning After Care program that provides an accurate account of the number of youth eligible for emancipation, the number of youth that have completed pre-exit interviews, exit interviews and post exit interviews, the number that have left custody, the number of surveys mailed, and the number returned. A break down of where they are residing, working, school, or current location, etc. will be provided. Follow up efforts shall include Educational & Training Voucher (ETV) application process to serve as a liaison between DFCS and the former foster youth ages 18-22.
- Develop and disseminate After Care brochures, flyers, resource materials and other documents. Stipend payments will be made by Southern Christian Services for Children & Youth (SCSCY) upon receipt of the completed survey forms to encourage increased participation. The use of surveys will be discussed at retreats and skills groups to make youth aware of the use of the information and the available stipend. Information shall be distributed to locations named in Scope of Services #2, and all DFCS county offices.
- Submit to MDHS in writing at the beginning of the contract year, a tentative listing of all conferences/training sessions with the names and title of staff to attend. All out of state travel requires prior written approval of DFCS/State Independent Living Coordinator.
- Serve as a Child Placing Agency for youth ages seventeen (17) and older who qualify for Independent Living Apartment Placements. Seventeen (17) year olds shall possess a high school diploma or GED.
- Recruit a minimum of fourteen (14) youth per contract period to be presented to the S.A.I.L.S. Advisory Board for approval of the Independent Living Apartment Placement Program.
- Resource Family training in conjunction with MDHS foster/adopt staff and Training Unit. SCSCY staff will attend a minimum of two (2) scheduled foster/adoptive parent training sessions per Adoption District during the contract period to increase awareness of the needs of older youth. IL Specialists will contact MDHS Adoption Administrators to obtain Resource Family training calendars.
- Achieve a target goal to make contact with all eligible participants, between the ages of 14 to 21. A 15% increase in the number of youth who participate on a regular basis is the target for the contract period.
- Complete a forty (40) hour week towards carrying out duties of the Independent Living Program. The hours may vary due to the different program components.
- Recruit and refer a minimum of eighteen (18) mentors for youth in the Independent Living Program per contract period. Explore current resources of any existing mentor programs such as Big Brother/Big Sister for the state of Mississippi to possibly implement and assist with mentor recruitment.
- SCSCY staff, in conjunction with the S.A.I.L.S. Regional Representative, will facilitate a youth led Hope Forum (Support Group) for each of the seven (7) Regions. The SCSCY staff will work with the State Independent Living Coordinator and MDHS staff to implement youth led support groups. HOPE



Forums will be held quarterly. Two (2) representatives from each region will be nominated at the regional level to attend on a S.A.I.L.S. Advisory Board meeting.

- All records involving youth in the Independent Living Plan (ILP) shall be kept confidential and not disclosed except as provided in section 43-21-261 of the Mississippi Code of 1972. An order of Limited Disclosure shall be issued by the court of competent jurisdiction for the youth before information is released.
- All photographs including videos, books, media presentation, both television and newspaper articles require an Order of Limited Disclosure under the Confidentiality Law.
- Develop and implement events to enhance youth leadership including the development of selection criteria and providing supervision at the events. The cost of the event will be covered by MDHS. Examples of these events include computer camps, music camps and other appropriate leadership activities.
- Increase by 10% the number of youth who are entering post secondary education. Awareness tactics will be developed and implemented to increase Education and Training Vouchers (ETV) requests by 10%.
- SCSCY staff in conjunction with the S.A.I.L.S. Advisory Board members will provide nominations for the Independent Living All-Star Youth display for the contract period.
- Create and distribute a newsletter highlighting IL services and activities. The newsletter is to be distributed quarterly to all individuals listed in Scope of Services #2. A copy of the newsletter is to be submitted to the State Independent Living Coordinator two (2) days prior to circulation.
- Distribute and keep a log of the FYI-3 Handbook provided by MDHS-DFCS. The FYI-3 Handbook is to be distributed to youth in care listed in the County of Services IL report provided by MDHS to all youth, ages 14-20, who enter care. SCSCY staff will deliver a handbook and document the delivery to each youth who turns 14 during the contract period.
- All services provided are to reflect and incorporate the four (4) Core Principles for adolescents' transitioning. They include: Youth Development, Collaboration, Cultural Competence, and Permanent Connections.

**Budgetary Levels for FY 2007:**

- MDHS-DFCS Independent Living Program will enter a contract agreement with SCSCY-PREPARE program to cost \$574,713.00. This contract is agreed to be between October 1, 2006 through July 31, 2007. Chafee dollars will assist with this contract payment and the Scope of Services for this contract is found under "Planned Activities". In addition to the contract agreement, it is estimated that stipend payments to cover the five (5) purpose areas, and other services to youth, will equal to be \$768,878.00. The budgetary level for ETV dollars is \$255,087.00.
- **Please provide information on specific CFCIP training that is planned for FY 2007, in support of the goals and objectives of the States' CFCIP.**

The DFCS-Independent Living Program will continue to provide training activities for youth who qualify for the IL Program, and to staff who service the youth in the program. Independent Living Program services, policy & practice will be presented State-wide to all staff who have youth on their Workload. Training & Technical assistance will be solicited from the National Child Welfare Resource Center for Youth Development, as well as other National Resources as necessary. In the contract agreement, youth will have an opportunity to attend nine (9) retreats and two (2) youth conferences. At these venues, youth will be presented information that will support the four (4) core principles of for youth in the program. These four (4) core principals, Youth Development, Collaboration, Cultural Competency, and Permanent Connections will be highlighted and included in any decisions making process for the activities made available to youth. Youth to be represented at Destination Future will continue to be solicited for approval. Training will be conducted on the FYI-3 Handbook that was just recently implemented. Training will continue to take place to present Independent Living program services, to include the new Transitional Living Plan implemented in MACWIS.

- **Please identify the number of youth that received ETV awards in FY 2006 (year-to-date). -80-**

The numbers provided did not include youth who are receiving ongoing vouchers (i.e., new voucher recipient in FY 2004 and continuing to receive vouchers in FY 2005 and FY 2006, plus those who were new recipients in FY 2005 (41) and continue (or not) into FY 2006.

- **Please identify for FY 2006, the number of youth who have received an award for the first time. -67-**
- **Please identify the estimated number of youth the State plans to award ETV vouchers to in FY 2007 via ongoing and new vouchers. -95-**

#### **Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA)**

The state of Mississippi has made significant progress toward accomplishing the goals and objectives set forth in the Child and Family Services Review in the past year relative to tribal consultation.

A workgroup has been established including participants from Choctaw Children and Family Services, Choctaw Family and Community Services, Mississippi Department of Human Services-Division of Family and Children Services, the Attorney General's Office, Neshoba County's County Attorney, Neshoba County Youth Court Referee and Neshoba County's Chancery Judge. Department of Human Services representatives include front line social workers, Area Social Work Supervisors and Regional Directors from all counties where any tribal lands are located.

Our purpose was identified as "through a cooperative effort all Mississippi Band of Choctaw children, both on and off domicile, will be served in a manner to provide for their safety and protection.

1. Identification of Indian children by the state child welfare services agency has been made with the assistance of Assistant Attorney General Melissa Carleton and Choctaw Social Service staff.
  - By definition an Indian child is any person under age eighteen who is a member of the tribe of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians or eligible for membership and the biological child of a tribal member. Membership in the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians Tribe is reserved for those persons with fifty percent or more Choctaw blood lineage.
  - When an abuse or neglect report is received by the MDHS/DFCS and the children may be Choctaw, based on their answers to the ICWA inquiry, a referral will be submitted to Choctaw Social Services.
  - Choctaw Social Services will search the tribal records and notify the MDHS/DFCS as to the tribal affiliation status of the child in question.
  - MDHS/DFCS will make an initial contact with the alleged victim. This will insure timely initiation of the investigation according to policy, if the allegations are deemed appropriate for investigation by the Area Social Work Supervisor.
  - Identifying information relative to the alleged victim will be faxed to Choctaw Social Services on the form provided by them.
  - A courtesy phone call will be made as well if the report is received during regular business hours. On-call schedules will be shared by DFCS counties where Choctaw populations reside as will Choctaw Social Service on call schedules being provided to DHS.
  - When Choctaw Social Services makes a determination regarding tribal affiliation MDHS/DFCS will be notified. If the child is determined not to be an Indian child, DFCS will continue with the investigation.
  - If the child is determined to be Choctaw and lives on tribal lands, Choctaw Social Services will immediately assume authority over the investigation. MDHS/DFCS will make themselves available to testify in the tribal court regarding their involvement in the investigation if requested.
2. If the child in question is found to be an Indian child living off tribal lands, the tribal court may assume jurisdiction only if given permission to do so by the child's parents. The parents must sign an authorization giving the tribal court their consent to the jurisdictional transfer.
3. Special placement preferences for placement of Indian children have been addressed.
  - Choctaw Social Services has agreed to identify and attempt to recruit Indian families living off tribal lands that will be willing to serve as Resource Families for Indian children. At least one home will be located by Choctaw Social Services to serve as a DFCS Resource Family for emergency

placements while tribal affiliation is being determined. These homes would also be available for placement of non-Indian children as deemed appropriate by MDHS/DFCS and the individual families.

- MDHS/DFCS will also assist with providing preferential placements through provision of ICPC services to both Choctaw and non-Choctaw children who live on tribal lands. MDHS/DFCS will provide ICPC home studies, placement supervision and progress reports as required. MDHS/DFCS will be given permission and any requested assistance to provide ICPC service in the fulfillment of providing special placement preferences to Indian children.
  - Should children with tribal affiliation other than with the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians require services, Choctaw Social Services expressed willingness to assist MDHS/DFCS in locating needed information through the tribal systems. Choctaw Social Services stated they have an understanding of tribal systems which they are willing to assist MDHS/DFCS with navigating.
  - Several MDHS representatives have attended National Conferences in Washington, D.C. in an attempt to insure agency understanding and state compliance with ICWA and MEPA laws and statutes. We have obtained a better understanding of the various processes related to implementation of the ICWA requirements.
4. Family is an integral part of the Choctaw social structure. Choctaw Social Services has approximately one hundred children in custody at any given time. A substantial majority of these children are placed in the homes of relatives. Although they do have regulations relative to placement, Choctaw Social Services states their placement requirements are not as stringent as those of MDHS/DFCS. Choctaw Social Services efforts to prevent break up of the family unit centers around preventive and treatment services very much like those MDHS/DFCS provides. MDHS/DFCS will make family preservation service available to Choctaw families living off tribal lands when deemed appropriate. MDHS/DFCS and Choctaw Social Services will cooperatively share information regarding available resources and prevention strategies as needed.

Training information on Family Centered Practice will be made available to Choctaw Social Services. Case plans entered into with Choctaw families living off tribal lands will be based on a family centered practice model. The same level of preventive service will be provided to Choctaw families living off tribal lands that are provided to all families MDHS/DFCS serves. MDHS will share information and resources with Choctaw Social Services as they desire assistance with providing the identified services to Choctaws living on tribal lands. MDHS/DFCS will share the recently completed PATH Training Curriculum established for training Resource Families with Choctaw Social Services. Family Team Meeting training may be arranged if requested by Choctaw Social Services.

5. MDHS/DFCS will respect the tribal courts and defer to the parents and tribal authority to assume jurisdiction over Choctaw children and families transferred to the tribal courts. The Neshoba County Youth Court Referee, County Attorney and

Chancery Judge are all willing to work with the Choctaw Tribal Court in a cooperative manner. It will be necessary to involve the court personnel in other counties and gain their support and agreement with the outlined plan of action.

MDHS/DFCS is in process of re-writing policy. ICWA and service provision to the Indian population are being included in each area as the policy is written.

6. MDHS/DFCS Independent Living policy has been revised with ICWA services included. MDHS/DFCS Independent Living Coordinator and Placement Director have met with Choctaw Social Services. Choctaw youth are being served with the same level of service as all youth in MDHS/DFCS custody. They are receiving services as specified by Chafee Independent Living Services. MDHS/DFCS policy specifies "The Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians Tribe youth are eligible for Independent Living Services based on the same criteria for MDHS/DFCS youth in care." Choctaw youth are being provided training, access to groups where they can learn self sufficiency skills as well as financial assistance. They are eligible to attend retreats, conferences and receive stipends for participation, education and after care.
7. Plans are underway to provide joint training with Choctaw Social Services (CSS). Melissa Carleton, Assistant Attorney General wrote a summary for the ICWA Workgroup to assist group participants in a better understanding of ICWA law and state and federal policies and guidelines. Choctaw Social Services has asked to be included in MDHS training relative to case planning, engagement and family centered practice. The MDHS Training Coordinator has been made aware of their request and will attempt to include CSS in training events.

The ICWA Workgroup plans to have a cooperative training event in the spring of 2007 including MDHS staff in counties with Choctaw populations, Choctaw Social Services, court personnel and law enforcement personnel from the counties and the reservation. This training will be led by Choctaw Social Services and MDHS staff. The agreed upon protocols for child protection will be presented as well as an overview of ICWA and other appropriate areas of concern. Choctaw Social Services has been given some information on IV-E eligibility determination. They are in the process of determining whether it will be cost effective for them to apply for these funds. DHS will provide available technical information if requested by the tribe. The Court Improvement Program grant requires ICWA involvement. The director of Mississippi's Court Programs, Jamie McBride, and Shundra Calhoun who assists him, is working with the Choctaws on this aspect of ICWA compliance. Assistant Attorney General, Melissa Carleton located and provided to the work group an Accord Between the Executive Branches of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians and the State of Mississippi. This Accord was signed November 24, 1997. One of our challenges appears to be law enforcement cooperation. Ms. Carleton believes this Accord will be instrumental in encouraging law enforcement involvement and cooperation between the tribe and local law enforcement.



7. MDHS has policies and procedures in effect to fulfill all requirements of SSA, Section 422 (b)(10) as it relates to any children who are placed in DHS custody. Efforts will be made to assess the tribes understanding and capabilities relative to the Statute as it applies to children in tribal care. This information will be included and discussed with the tribe in greater detail at future meetings. The outcomes will be reported in a timely manner.

Mississippi has planned multiple activities for the upcoming fiscal year in the area of prevention and treatment as well as integration of the Child and Family Services Plan with the Program Improvement Plan for inclusion in the Annual Progress and Service Report.

- A. We will continue to meet as a workgroup to identify areas needing to be addressed and to maintain established relationships.
- B. MDHS/DFCS supervisors will monitor workers compliance in gathering required ICWA information and entering the information in the MACWIS system. A request will be made for a report to be generated identifying any Choctaw children entering MDHS/DFCS custody.
- C. MDHS/DFCS will participate in tribal court as requested.
- D. MDHS/DFCS will process any Resource Family applications received from Choctaw families in a timely manner according to policy guidelines.
- E. MDHS/DFCS will provide ICPC services to Indian families.
- F. MDHS/DFCS representatives will attend updated ICWA training based on availability of funding.
- G. MDHS/DFCS will provide Family Preservation services when appropriate and available to the Choctaw families MDHS/DFCS serves.
- H. MDHS/DFCS will include CSS in agency training opportunities as appropriate to assist them in providing up to date practice models to their clients.
- I. MDHS/DFCS will share information and resources with CSS when appropriate to do so.
- J. MDHS/DFCS will share the Resource Family Training Curriculum with CSS.
- K. MDHS/DFCS will include references to services provided to Indian children and families in each section of the policy manual that relates to ICWA services.
- L. MDHS/DFCS will continue to provide Independent Living Services to eligible Choctaw Youth.
- M. MDHS/DFCS will participate in planning and training on ICWA and established protocols when completed.
- N. Protocols for service provision in the area of child protection will be completed, trained and implemented.
- O. IV-E Eligibility assistance and referral for technical support will be provided by MDHS/DFCS if requested.

P. MDHS/DFCS will encourage law enforcement participation and involvement in the processes and protocols established.

### **Training Plan**

The DFCS Training Program is under the supervision of the Protection Unit. During 2006, the Training Program experienced a number of changes within the program. Nonetheless, the training program continue to address the needs of staff training and development by pooling various division resources to ensure staff training needs are met.

The Training Program staff currently consists of one social work consultant, one program manager and three program specialists. Plans for FY 2007 are to hire one training director and seven statewide regional training coordinators to provide more expedited training to county staff. With the additional staff, more supportive training will be provided to direct service staff and supervisory staff.

The MDHS Training Program provides 4 weeks of Intensive Training for all new MDHS Social Workers and Child Protection Specialists. We also provide MACWIS Training and MACWIS Refresher Training to direct service workers, supervisory staff and other support staff in need of training. The Intensive Training curriculum incorporates the Mississippi Automated Child Welfare Information System (MACWIS), Best Practices, and other practice work into the Intensive Training Curriculum. The Intensive Training curriculum has not been updated since FY 2004; however, plans are underway with a local university to complete revisions of the Intensive Training Curriculum. The new changes will reflect changes in state and federal mandates, agency policy changes and practice changes. The current four weeks of intensive training include three weeks of practice and policy and one week of automated child welfare practice training. MACWIS. The curriculum for this training is frequently updated to reflect new policies, practice, and procedures.

During FY 2006 the training unit conducted three Intensive Training classes for new staff, four MACWIS Refresher training sessions for existing staff, and a host of other support training sessions for staff to enhance job performance. The full outline of training held during FY 2006 is listed in Appendix A. The plan of action for FY 2007 is to add more training classes for new hires, new supervisors, existing staff and support training classes to supplement learning and improve job performance. The schedule for FY 2007 training provisions is shown as Appendix B.

Ongoing training for caseworkers and supervisors has been a random offering of various trainings and conferences without a core curriculum targeted at enhancing specific skills and the knowledge base required by the field. In order to address this matter, the DFCS training program will be restructured to include the development and implementation of a comprehensive training system for both caseworkers and supervisors. This training system will include two tracks – one for caseworkers and one for supervisors. The caseworker track will have two levels: Level I will comprise intensive training for new caseworkers, and Level II will be the ongoing advanced

training for all caseworkers. The Supervisory track will also have two levels: Level I will be the intensive supervisory training for all new supervisors, and Level II will be the on-going advanced supervisory training for all supervisors. Level I training for both new caseworkers and new supervisors is core training provided during the initial phase of employment. Level II training is intended to be ongoing with new training areas and topics being evaluated, added and revised on an annual basis.

DFCS contracted with the University of Southern Mississippi to revise the current Intensive Training curriculum. The deliverables are being reviewed by agency staff to determine acceptance of the documents. The university contracted with our agency to also rewrite our supervisory training curriculum for new supervisors and advanced training curriculums to support core training for existing direct service staff and supervisory staff.

Due to staff shortages in FY 2006, the Training Unit was not able to conduct many on-the-job training sessions with new workers, but plans are underway to modify this important program with new training plans.

The University of Southern Mississippi is being contracted with to take over the process of updating DFCS's Intensive Training Curriculum. The Intensive Training Curriculum will be revised yearly based on an analysis of need, agency policy updates, MACWIS system changes and child welfare practice. MDHS is currently in the final stages of completing a contractual agreement with the University of Southern Mississippi, School of Social Work, to revise and develop curriculum for new and existing staff. Implementation and a plan of action between MDHS/DFCS and the University of Southern Mississippi will include revisions of the existing Core Intensive Training Curriculum for new workers, supervisors and the development of a Level II caseworker training that will consist of three two-day training modules in Case Planning, Assessment and Engagement. In addition, a one-day writing module will also be developed to enhance staff writing skills. All future revisions of each curriculum identified will be done through the survey process, as well as with either a focus group, the University of Southern Mississippi School of Social Work or other curriculum development sources external to MDHS.

The Training Unit plans to include on-the-job training for all training participants in conjunction with supervisory staff during alternate weeks the participants are not participating in the intensive training session. The on-the-job training includes targeted training on practice and policy, assessments of the family's strengths and risk to the child, which include Family Centered Practice; the use of the best practices tools; case planning; and working with sexually abused children and their families. The Intensive Training program in the past has been taught every other week, however in the last few sessions we have moved the training up to 4 straight weeks of training with on-the-job-training provided by the supervisory and county staff.

The plan to implement a newly revised training program during FY 2007 include regional training sessions to be held either regionally or within the State Office and

Hinds County area. The training sessions will last four to five weeks at four and a half days per week, based upon an eight-hour work day. The Training Program will train staff within their regions to allow for more expedited training sessions. The local training sites will allow for easy access to training and expedite the overall training process. This will also enhance services to children and families; provide earlier skill training for newly hired case workers and comply with the guidelines for quality practice according to the PIP. The expedited plan of action should improve quality casework throughout the division. The number of graduates will vary based on the number of new hires available for each training session.

Training Program Staff have been involved in the "Casework Supervision Learning Labs", provided by a grant through the Children's Bureau through the University of Kentucky. This training was provided to the Area Social Work Supervisors and Regional Directors in Regions I-West and I-East. Preliminary work has begun to provide this training to Area Social Work Supervisors and Regional Directors state-wide. The training was conducted through the University of Mississippi, by Assistant Professor Kim Shackelford. Professor Shackelford is a former employee of DFCS and has prior knowledge of our mission and training needs of staff.

The MACWIS curriculum was revised and MACWIS Refresher Training is being provided to staff to enhance staff knowledge of the state child welfare information system, MACWIS. The Training Program staff will continue to revise the MACWIS curriculum as modifications are made to the system. We will assist DFCS staff state-wide in the on-going use of MACWIS.

The Training Program staff continues to provide financial and clerical training and assistance to Area Social Work Supervisors and Regional Directors concerning the MACWIS bookkeeping system. Plans are underway to revise the clerical curriculum and provide a clerical conference for county bookkeepers during FY 2007 as the budget permits.

The Training Program continues to assist with the Mississippi's Permanency Partnership Network Conference. In FY 2006, the MPPN conference provided training to the Area Social Work Supervisors to enhance their leadership and knowledge base. Each year this conference provides training on the most current information to direct service workers regarding innovative programs and services, and to further promote and encourage the growth of the state-wide community-based network. The goal of the conference is to maintain a constant illustration of community partnerships through the examples provided by the workshop presenters and to provide information needed to successfully guide the children in our lives.

The MPPN conference is sponsored each year by DFCS and continues to allow training opportunities for staff members. This conference brings together parents, consumers of services, professionals, advocates, public officials, Legislators, private business/industry, and public services to provide state-of-the-art training to improve

the child protection system and to enhance the statewide network of community-based, prevention-focused, family resource and support programs.

As stated earlier, the University of Southern Mississippi contracted with DFCS to update the Core Intensive Training curriculum for new workers, supervisors and the development of a Level II direct service worker training that will consist of three two-day training modules in Case Planning, Assessment and Engagement. In addition, a one-day writing module will also be developed to enhance staff writing skills. Surveys of all training sessions provided will be conducted to help enhance the training program and provide quality training services to staff. All future revisions of curriculums will be developed based on the outcome of the surveys and in conjunction with either a focus group; the University of Southern Mississippi, School of Social Work if an agreeable alliance is continued after the initial revisions and curriculum developments; and or other curriculum development sources external to the agency.

**Plan:**

An earlier pilot study program was launched to include ASWS staff in four regions of the State. Two of the regions were in the control group and the other two participated in the learning labs provided by the University of Mississippi. These learning labs covered such topics as supervision styles, adult learning theory, professional development, developing supervisor competencies, supervisory strengths and needs, and many other topics. The DFCS Supervisory Training curricula has been revised based on the theoretical concept of the learning labs in the original pilot program. As indicated above, DFCS is working with the University of Southern Mississippi to develop a training program to include updating the Intensive Training curriculum for new employees and ongoing training curricula for caseworkers and supervisors. This is one of the major strategies in the Mississippi PIP, which is attached and integrated into the CFSP. As part of the Mississippi PIP, the current training program in conjunction with the Policy and Practice Workgroup work to restructure the development and implementation of a comprehensive training system for both caseworkers and supervisors. The training system will include two categories; one will be designed for the caseworkers, and the other designed for the supervisors. Each category will have two levels: Level 1 will be intensive training for all new caseworkers and supervisors and Level 2 will be an ongoing skill based training specific to the duties and role of the person being trained. Each level will build on the prior training to continue enhancing caseworker and supervisory skills. The complete training system is shown in Appendix B.



**Goal:**

- To increase casework knowledge and skills in an effort to improve outcomes in the areas of safety, permanency, and well-being.

**Objectives:**

- To guarantee all beginning caseworkers are trained on concepts and procedures related to DFCS' policies and procedure guidelines in a timely manner.
- To make certain caseworkers continue to receive training to reinforce existing policies, practices, and procedures
- To maintain training on policy, practice, and procedure changes in a more consistent and ongoing manner.

**Staff Training**

- Provide a pilot training mentorship for staff within at least one DFCS Region. Mentorship will be provided by the University of Southern Mississippi. The mentorship will be designed to reinforce training on an ongoing basis in the selected DFCS Region. The evaluative results of this pilot will be used to determine whether or not a model should be developed for all Regions in future contractual agreements with the universities.
- Provide support to the implementation of the PIP through DFCS staff training. This support will target each of the nine Regions and include, but not be limited to the following:
  - Participate in at least one training-the-trainer session in preparation for implementation of the Mississippi PIP.
  - Participate in at least one staff training session targeting PIP components.
  - Conduct at least one follow-up session during the month following each staff training session to reiterate training objectives and evaluate staff's retention of knowledge, specifically related to the training modules (Target staff: Regional Directors and Area Social Work Supervisors). DFCS reserves the right to approve/disapprove all evaluation tools.
  - Evaluate the follow-up session in an effort to capture measurable data regarding transference of training to practice. A report will be prepared to present the evaluative findings by Region or as otherwise requested. Recommendations will be highlighted in the areas showing a need for improvement.
  - Foster/Adopt Training –Provide training for foster/adoptive parents.
  - Provide a minimum of 12 hours of in-service training per school per quarter. (Each university will provide a total of 48 hours of training per year.) Training will be coordinated with DFCS Training Program and Foster/Adopt Licensure staff. [As stated in the contractual agreement, all curricula developed by CWTI are the sole property of MDHS.] DFCS reserves the right to approve/disapprove selection of all CWTI trainers.

Training topics will include, but not limited to the following: Working With Children With Special Needs I and II; Transitions in Foster Care I and II; Discipline Without

the Use of Corporal Punishment I and II; and Working With Biological Parents I and II.

### **Training and Development**

The following training modules are geared toward the State's Program Improvement Plan:

#### **Assessment**

This component will focus on adequately assessing a family's environment at the investigation level as well as throughout the life of the case by completing the ongoing assessment. Particular emphasis will be on assessing the family's strengths and weaknesses as these relate to risk, safety, and well-being. Trainees will receive information about the tools (Genogram, Ecomap, Hierarchy, Sequencing, and Scaling) that can assist them in making an appropriate assessment of the family.

#### **Family Centered Practice**

This component will focus on the philosophy of Family Centered Practice. Family Centered Practice is based on the belief that children need safe, stable, supportive families and communities, and it values family dignity, strengths, diversity, and cultural heritage. It is also based on the belief that people can change with the right education and support, and that crisis can bring opportunities for change and growth. The training will emphasize these beliefs and values.

#### **Case Planning**

This component will focus on developing Individualized Service Plans with children and their families; outcome-based case work and visitation; permanency, and concurrent planning; emancipation, independent living, interdependent living, and transitional living issues. Trainees will receive information about writing behavioral goals that are realistic and measurable. Methods of incorporating the client as a partner in the case planning process will be identified and discussed. Emphasis will be placed on using solution focused techniques in the creation of a case plan that incorporates appropriate and objective work activities that are reflective of the assessment.

Trainees will be given information about having effective home visits that focus on outcomes set by the family and will educate them about working with the family on accessing needed services. Through this training, trainees will also learn techniques for working toward reunification while at the same time establishing an alternative permanency plan. Workers will gain knowledge which will promote early permanency decisions for children and as a result will decrease the children's lengths of stay in foster care. Trainees will also discuss the importance of maintaining continuity for foster children by helping them stay connected with family, siblings, and community.